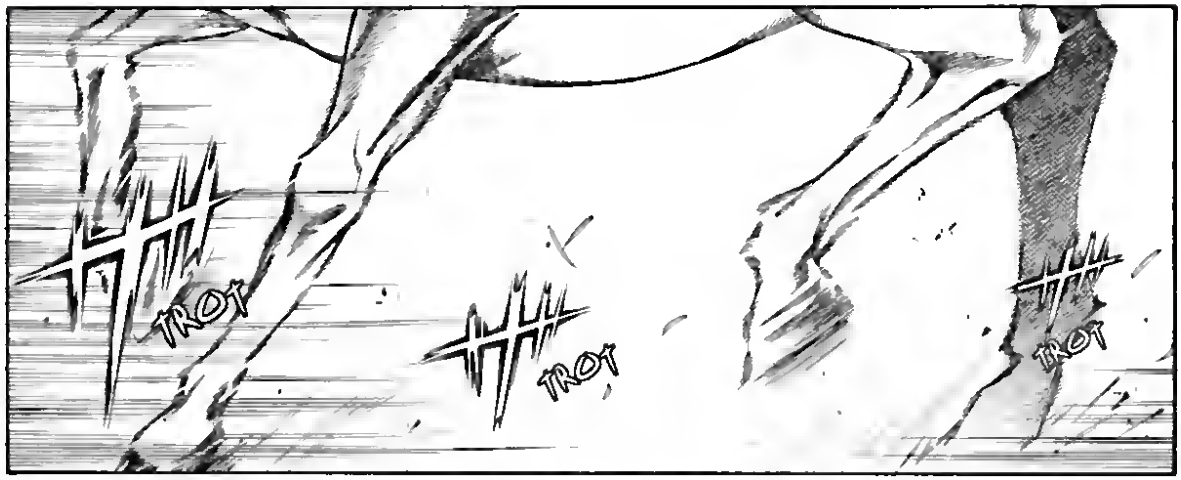
DANGER IS APPROACHING MUSASHI, AS WELL AS A MAN SPURRING HIS HORSE ON!



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IT'S AN ENEMY ATTACK!
GATHER THE NEIGHBORHOOD MEN!
PUT CHILDREN BEHIND THE MANSION! THE WAREHOUSE FURTHEST FROM THE VILLAGE IS FINE!

IT MAY BE SOMEONE IN THE OPPOSITION TAKING ADVANTAGE OF MUSASHI'S DIFFICULTIES DURING OUR SUCCESSION!
WE DON'T YET KNOW FOR SURE THAT IT'S ANOTHER COUNTRY ATTACKING!
DON'T PANIC!
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
I HOPE IT ISN'T A VERY LARGE-SCALE ATTACK APPROACHING...
THE FIRE WE SAW WAS NOT VERY LARGE, BUT...
SHF
LADY MIKU'S LIFE IS IN DANGER?!
GRIP
THEY MAY ALSO BE PLANNING ON TARGETING LADY MIKU.
Eek!
THERE MAY BE COUNTRIES THAT SOME-HOW LEARNED ABOUT THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN OWARI AND MUSASHI.

I WILL NOT ALLOW THEM TO TRY IT!
FWIP
YANK
YOUR CHEST?
THE ARMOR IS BULKY, I'M GOING OUT LIKE THIS.
THAT'S DANGEROUS! YOU DON'T KNOW WHO THE ENEMY IS!!
WE DON'T EVEN KNOW IF IT IS AN ENEMY FORCE, THOUGH.
LORD LEN...

PLEASE, YOU MUST RETURN SAFELY...
I... I WILL.
I WILL BE SURE TO PROTECT YOU!
LEN, YOU CAN'T GO ALL ALONE!
REINFORCE-MENTS WILL BE HERE SOON...
I CAN'T STAY. THEY'LL BREAK IN WHILE I'M WAITING!
YOU MUST ALL STAY HERE.
DASH
FARE-WELL...
WAIT!

YANK
?!
OH, MY.
RIN... SISTER... THIS IS IMMODEST.
JERK
...?!

GRIP
JUST COME BACK SAFELY ...
I... I WILL.....

...!WHICH WILL I CHOOSE...?
LADY MIKU OR RIN...
SHF
SHF
WILL I SACRIFICE MY LOVE FOR THE COUNTRY...?
OR SACRIFICE MY COUNTRY FOR MY LOVE...?
GRIMACE

THE ANSWER IS OBVIOUS.
NO... WHAT AM I THINK-ING?
EVEN IF WE LOVE EACH OTHER, WE CANNOT BE TOGETHER.
AND BE-SIDES...
RIN IS MY SISTER.
...IF I GO THROUGH WITH THE MARRIAGE TO LADY MIKU, THE COUNTRY AND ITS PEOPLE WILL BE SAVED...
SHK SHK
AND SO WILL MY SISTER AND I.

IT'S YOU!
SHK
SHK
SHK
THOK
FOOL. WHY WOULD A FARMER BE WANDERING AROUND THIS TIME OF NIGHT WEARING AN OUTFIT LIKE THAT?
GUH...
CRUNCH

IF THEY ARE JUST BANDITS, THEN I DON'T NEED TO WAIT FOR REINFORCEMENTS FROM NEARBY VILLAGES... I CAN DO SOMETHING ON MY OWN.
HE'S JUST A SIMPLE BANDIT.
HIS EQUIPMENT IS OLD, AND HE'S NOT MOVING IN A GROUP.
LET'S CLEAR THIS UP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

HM?!
SLICE

NGH... AH...
HUH ...?
SPLSH!
SLICE
PLSH
WHA...
H-HEY!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU, YOU BASTARD!

SLASH
THOK
GACK
SPLSH
STUMBLE

...MY SISTER AND LADY MIKU!
FWISH
I WILL PROTECT...
SHOOOK

IT HAS BEEN OVER AN HOUR SINCE THEN... I WONDER IF LORD LEN IS ALL RIGHT.
OUR UNCLE'S REINFORCEMENTS HAVE ARRIVED, SO IT WILL BE FINE. THE DIRECTION WE SAW THAT LIGHT IN IS LIKELY AN AREA FOR SIMPLE BANDITS, I BELIEVE.
INDEED... THOUGH MUSASHI IS CERTAINLY NOT IN THE BEST CONDITION AT THE MOMENT, THESE BANDITS ARE FOOLISH FOR JOCKEYING FOR POSITION...
AT ANY RATE, IT'S VERY... BOLD.

MAY I THINK OF THAT... AS YOUR ANSWER TO MY RECENT QUESTION?
NO, I WAS SPEAKING OF YOUR ACTIONS, DEAR SISTER.
!
DEAR SISTER... ARE YOU IN LOVE WITH LORD LEN?

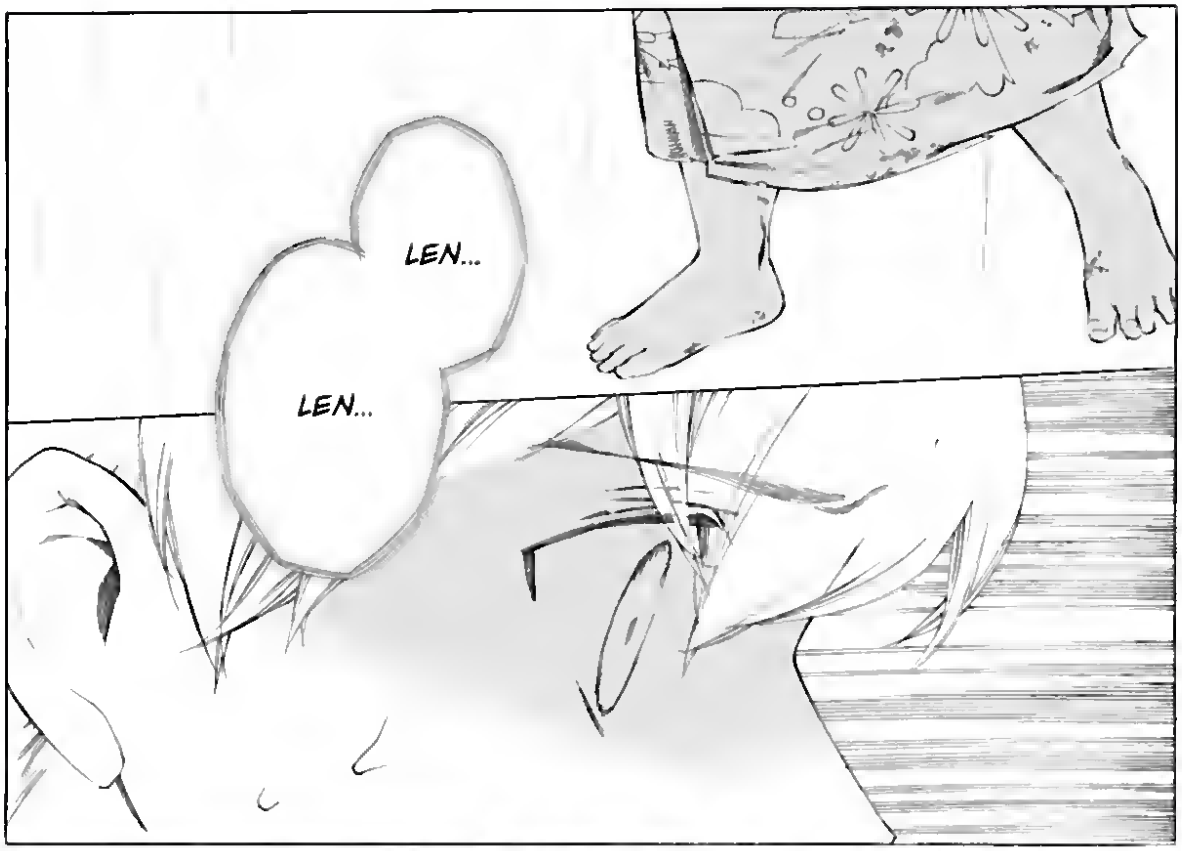
OH, NO... DO NOT BE TOO CONCERNED...
I AM THE FOOL WHO JOCKEYS FOR POSITION.
.....
I AM TERRIBLY SORRY.

LORD LEN... PLEASE COME BACK QUICKLY...!
TWITCH
TWITCH
WAHH...
KSH!
STUMBLE
THEY DON'T APPEAR TO BE FROM THE ARMY OF THE NEIGH-BORING COUN-TRIES... IF THEY ARE BANDITS, THERE SHOULD BE AROUND TEN MEN LEFT... PERHAPS.
I HAVE DEFEATED TEN MEN...

FWUMP
WHAT IS THIS SENSATION... HAVE I BEEN CUT?
...!
MY BODY... MY LEGS ARE HEAVY...
SCOOT SCOOT

AAAH
H!
...?!

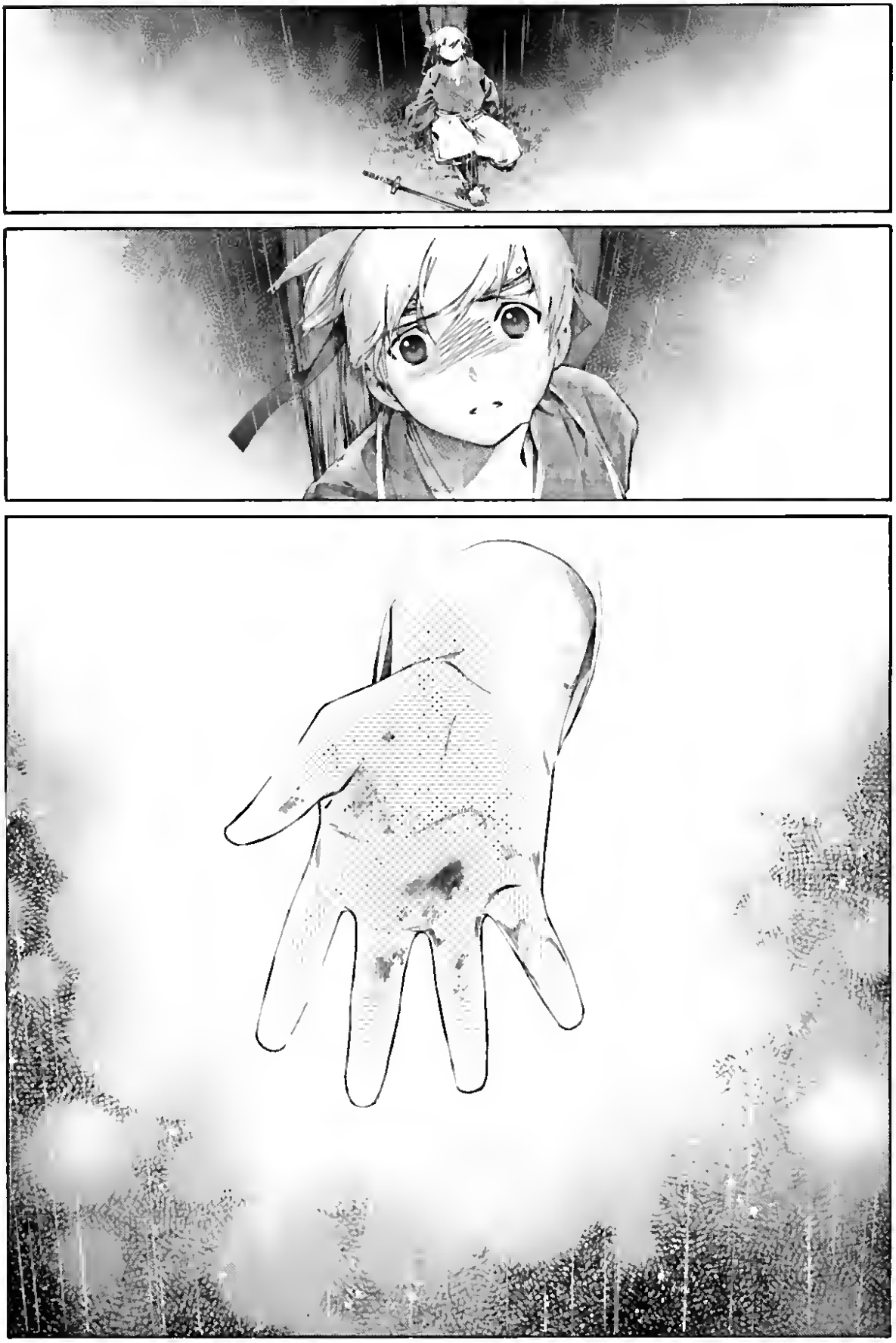
FSH
...?!
WHY...
WHY CAN I NOT HIT IT?!
SWING


LEN...
LEN...

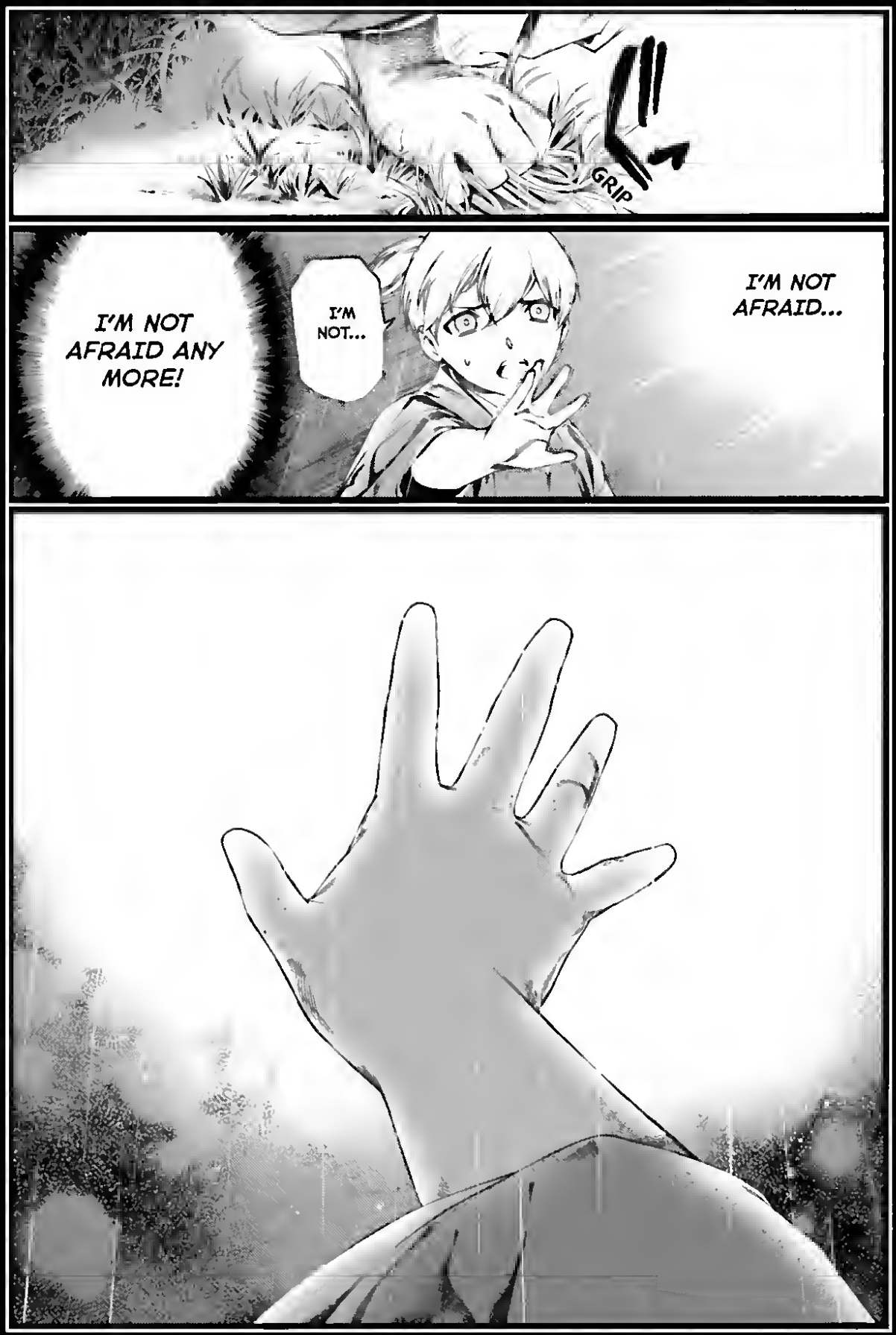
I KNOW THIS VOICE.
THAT'S RIGHT... I HAVE HEARD THIS VOICE... IN THESE MOUNTAINS BEFORE...
ズキン
TWINGE
LEN... WHERE ARE YOU, LEN...
.....
...NO.
GRIP
I...
WHO-- WHO IS IT?!
ENSH

WHOSE VOICE IS IT...?
WHOSE...?

LEN...
HA...
TSUNE...
WHERE...
ARE
YOU...?
THIS
VOICE...
IT'S...!
DUN
DUN
...!!



...IN THESE MOUNTAINS. AND I SAW THIS LIGHT...!
I HEARD THIS VOICE...
THAT'S RIGHT... I...


GRIP
I'M NOT AFRAID...
I'M NOT...
I'M NOT AFRAID ANY MORE!

?!
WHAT'RE YOU DOIN' HERE, YA IDIOT?
SLEEPIN' IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FOREST...
WERE YOU THE ONE WHO KILLED OUR FRIENDS?!
SHK
D... DAMN!
DIIIII-IEEEE!!
ZOOM!

WHAT IS THE MATTER?
FROM WHAT I HAVE HEARD YOU ARE NOT THE TYPE OF MAN TO BE CAUGHT OFF GUARD AND MURDERED IN THE FOREST BY BANDITS LIKE THESE, ARE YOU?
SHF

WHAT IS THE HERO OF THE COMING GENER-ATION DOING HERE?!
K-KAI-DOU?!
THAT LONG-SWORD AND WHITE JACKET...!
LORD... KAIDOU...?
YOU ARE...?

SHOOF
I HAD SOME SMALL BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF, AND NOW THAT I HAVE ARRIVED, THIS BAND OF RUFFIANS HAS SHOWN UP...
TREMUF
THAT I AM.
AND YOU ARE LEN.
SHF
SHF
SHK
I AM NOT MUCH FOR THEIR... SURPRISE ATTACK STRATEGY.
JUST ONE PERSON, FACING ALL THESE BANDITS ALONE. I DO INDEED RESPECT YOU, LEN, AND I SHALL HELP YOU ALL THE SAME.

I WILL NOT LET ANY ONE OF YOU LEAVE ALIVE!
LORD KAIDOU... THANK YOU...
THEY WERE... NOT A HAL-LUCINATION AT ALL...
BADUM
BADUM
BUT THAT LIGHT, AND THE SMALL HAND I SAW...
STRETCH

LEN SAW A "HAND" AND
"FOXFIRE." IS THE TRUTH OF
THE PAST CLOSE AT HAND?!
BADUM